

I am in support of the package of Water Affordability bills: HB (5088-5093)

Implementing a Water Affordability Program would tailor water bills to a household income. This would alleviate the burden of water and sewerage bills to thousands of households and provide a sustainable model to water providers. Customers would be able to pay their bills and generate an income for water providers. Discounts for low income families would more than compensate for the \$2 monthly fee.

Why is the Water Affordability package needed beyond the big cities? Because the majority of those living below the poverty level are now residing in suburban communities. The rise in poverty along with the growing costs of water has made water and sewerage bills unaffordable for many suburban households. Let's take out blinders off and admit that the poor live all over the state, in cities, suburbs and rural areas.

Recent interviews of Oakland and Macomb County residents found that even in the wealthiest communities residents are struggling to pay their water bills. Those interviewed said that financial hardship resulted from health problems, job loss, fixed incomes and unstable employment. All were distressed by the threat of shutoffs.

Assistance programs may help but they are temporary and underfunded. Many suburbs rely on shutting off water and imposing liens on the property taxes to force these residents to pay.

Policymakers have the power and need to step up and help relieve their residents of the this stress and pass this package of Water Affordability Bills.

Diane Weckerle, Retired Public Health Nurse